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COOPERATION BETWEEN THE UNITED NATIONS AND THE ORGANIZATION OF THE ISLAMIC CONFERENCE
COOPERATION BETWEEN THE UNITED NATIONS AND THE LEAGUE OF ARAB STATES
COOPERATION BETWEEN THE UNITED NATIONS AND THE ECONOMIC COOPERATION ORGANIZATION
COOPERATION BETWEEN THE UNITED NATIONS AND THE ORGANIZATION FOR SECURITY AND COOPERATION IN EUROPE
COOPERATION BETWEEN THE UNITED NATIONS AND THE ORGANIZATION OF AFRICAN UNITY

SECURITY COUNCIL
Fifty-third year

Identical letters dated 19 August 1998 from the Secretary-General addressed to the President of the General Assembly and to the President of the Security Council

I wish to thank you for your participation in the third meeting between the United Nations and regional organizations, which recently took place in New York.

I am particularly pleased that we had an open and frank discussion and a constructive exchange of views on some of the most important issues affecting cooperation between the United Nations and regional organizations in the field of conflict prevention. I have taken careful note of suggestions made for enhancing our interaction in this field.

I also welcome the emphasis that was placed at the meeting on the need for effective follow-up and the decision taken to convene a working level meeting between the United Nations and participating regional organizations, before the end of the year, to develop further the modalities for collaboration that we discussed.

In the meantime, I have the pleasure to enclose a copy of the summary statement I delivered at the concluding session of the meeting, which highlights some of the main points of our meeting.

It is clear to me that there will be a growing need for expanded and more effective cooperation in the field of conflict prevention between the United Nations and regional organizations, and I value the support of the General Assembly in this regard.

I would be grateful if the present letter and my concluding statement (see annex) could be circulated as a document of the General Assembly, under agenda items 31, 33, 34, 40 and 42 of the fifty-second session, and of the Security Council.

(Signed) Kofi A. ANNAN

Annex

Summary statement of the Secretary-General at the concluding session of the third meeting between the United Nations and regional organizations, held on 28 and 29 July 1998

1. I am very pleased that the third high-level meeting between the United Nations and regional organizations has successfully taken place at Headquarters. I am also gratified by the positive response to my invitation as reflected by your active participation here. I further welcome your support for my proposal to discuss "Cooperation for conflict prevention" as the theme of the meeting and the constructive spirit of dialogue that took place here.

2. I will now try to summarize my understanding of the discussions held at the meeting and to highlight some of the main points that appeared particularly significant to me.

3. The first two meetings, held in 1994 and 1996, focused on general principles and modalities to guide cooperation between the United Nations and regional organizations in the field of international peace and security. Based on the understandings reached at the previous two meetings, this meeting examined the potential for greater interaction and cooperation between the United Nations and regional organizations in the field of conflict prevention within the framework of the Charter of the United Nations and the mandates of regional organizations. In particular, we discussed the challenge of conflict prevention, reviewed how the United Nations and regional organizations are responding to meet this challenge and identified areas of possible future interaction and collaboration in this area.

4. In an era when the principal threat to human security is increasingly coming from new and more diverse forms of conflict, the challenge of conflict prevention goes to the very heart of the shared mission of the United Nations and regional organizations. To meet this challenge, the critical need to develop a culture of prevention and specific forms of action and interaction in this field was recognized. To this end, two distinct categories of cooperation were noted. First, we looked at "structural prevention", namely, the need to address the economic, social, ethnic and other root causes of conflict and to promote greater respect for human rights, maintenance of the rule of law and strengthening of democratic institutions. Then we discussed "operational prevention", which encompasses the traditional forms of conflict prevention and "early warning". In this context, it was noted that prevention is a continuum that ranges from early warning, through preventive diplomacy, preventive disarmament (in particular of small arms), preventive deployment and on to peace-building, both before and after conflicts.

5. It was further recognized that the United Nations and the regional organizations possess various strengths and capabilities in the area of conflict prevention and that the focus should now be placed on how these organizations can work together to achieve greater complementarity as mutually reinforcing institutions, making use of their comparative advantages. Since the United Nations and some regional organizations have recently established new mechanisms

for early warning and conflict prevention, there is an increasing need to share experiences in this field.

6. It was noted, in particular, that the key to conflict prevention lies with Member States and their support for early external involvement to defuse disputes and crises. In this regard, the value of a 'rule based' approach to prevention was underscored, as it makes efforts to avoid conflicts more effective as well as more acceptable to the international community. This can be helpful in developing a culture of prevention, thereby overcoming the reluctance of some Governments to accept outside help on grounds of sovereignty. In this connection, several speakers emphasized the importance of mobilizing public opinion in support of increased efforts in the field of conflict prevention.

7. The United Nations and regional organizations affirmed their common commitment to developing specific modalities for more effective cooperation in the field of conflict prevention that are practical and implementable. All representatives present placed great emphasis on the need to make this a reality by ensuring practical follow-up to the meeting. While recognizing that no single model of cooperation between the United Nations and regional organizations will cover all eventualities, various possible modalities for cooperation were considered, including: measures for more regular consultation at the Headquarters level, including in the context of early warning; more systematic coordination of preventive activities in the field, including joint missions as appropriate; development of common indicators for early warning; establishment of a database of the conflict prevention capabilities of the United Nations and regional organizations; better flow of information; exchange of liaison officers; visits of staff at the working-level between the different headquarters; joint training of staff in the field of prevention; building specific links to civil society (including the media and professional groups) to increase awareness of the value of prevention; and similar measures to be determined on a case-by-case basis. In this context, the need for mobilizing effective resources for early warning and preventive activities was stressed.

8. One possible means of follow-up would be for working-level meetings of the staff of the United Nations and regional organizations to be convened to develop further the modalities for interaction and collaboration discussed at the meeting. The United Nations will be prepared to convene the first such meeting before the end of 1998. The value of periodic high-level meetings between the United Nations and regional organizations was also recognized, and it was agreed that such meetings should continue to be convened in the future.

9. I very much hope that this summary has captured the essence of our meeting and I would welcome your observations.